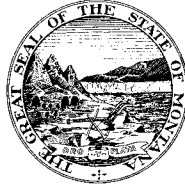


OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR



SENATE EDUCATION
EXHIBIT NO. 2
DATE 5-10-07
BILL NO. SB 2
JOHN BOHLINGER
LT. GOVERNOR

Testimony on behalf of Governor Brian Schweitzer on Senate Bill 2, Governor's Education Funding, revise education laws, before the House Education and Senate Education and Cultural Resources Committees, May 10, 2007, 1:00 PM

Mr. Chair and members of the committees, for the record my name is Jan Lombardi, and I am the education policy advisor for Governor Brian Schweitzer.

Senator Williams have given an eloquent and compelling introduction for this education bill.

Senate Bill 2 continues Montana on our journey to ensure we adequately invest in education in Montana. Why is that important?

- Parents want the option of full-day kindergarten for their young children can have the best beginning possible.
- Elementary and high school students -- regardless of how rich or poor their neighborhood -- need to have an equal opportunity to learn,
- Adults deserve the chance to seek a Montana college education without being limited by the size of their bank account, and
- Montana needs a ready workforce for today and tomorrow.

I stand before you on behalf of the Governor in support of this bill. I will briefly summarize the main points.

This bill invests in K-12 system for our kids, schools and teachers, **based on local control.**

- First, full-time Kindergarten. Governor Schweitzer believes the best results come from investing early in education and supports **optional** full-time kindergarten for all children.

In addition to full-time kindergarten, this bill includes important steps toward fully addressing the needs of our K-12 school system, including

- inflationary increase for entitlements
- Increasing the per-quality educator component; and establishing a loan assistance program for quality educators – both designed to help local school board trustees recruit and retain quality teachers and other licensed professionals
- Ensuring safe and adequate school buildings through a School Facility Improvement Account and providing a one-time only appropriation for capital investments and deferred maintenance;
- Supporting the need for all children to understand the unique cultural heritage of Montana's American Indians;

- Helping schools to meet the distinctive needs of their gifted and talented students.
- Finally, this bill also streamlines the Governor's "Best and Brightest" postsecondary scholarships to reach more students with merit and need-based scholarships.

Education matters from the youngest Montanans getting ready for school and having access to full-time kindergarten to adults wanting to afford college, moving us to a world class education system.

Senate Bill 2 focuses on building a strong academic future for all Montana's children and building a strong workforce for tomorrow. On behalf of the Governor, I urge you to pass Senate Bill 2. Thank you.